

Health Disparities

Improving the Health of Underserved Populations



Despite steady improvements in the overall health of the U.S., racial and ethnic minorities experience a lower quality of health services and have higher rates of morbidity and mortality than non-minorities. To address this problem, Abt Associates is working with hospitals, community-based organizations, and government agencies—**evaluating and improving programs to reduce health disparities** among underserved populations.

Cultural Knowledge

Abt Associates' capabilities in research and analysis cover the broad spectrum of health disparities—from infant mortality to senior health, and from racial and ethnic minorities to rural residents and persons living with HIV/AIDS. This expertise is heightened by our cultural sensitivities so that we can meaningfully support health organizations and individual practitioners serving vulnerable populations.

40 Years of Experience in Health Research

Our four decades of research experience in healthcare and health policy issues have provided us with deep knowledge and experience in areas in which health disparities are common—mental health, drug and alcohol addiction, maternal and child health, men's and women's health, cardiovascular disease, cancer, HIV/AIDS, immunization and nutrition.

Our Team

Our team includes doctors, nurses, program directors, clinical researchers, academicians and policymakers from many different backgrounds and cultures. This diversity allows us to effectively engage a variety of populations and critically analyze issues from multiple perspectives. We use cross-cultural and interdisciplinary teams as an organizational asset and draw upon a host of ideas and experiences to develop comprehensive analyses and operative solutions. As a result, we are able to:

- Manage projects that require distinctive implementation and management strategies;
- Provide technical assistance focused on enhancing organizations' capacity to engage underserved populations;



- Provide tailored cultural competency workshops and training;
- Inform survey design and implementation to maximize data collection.

Cultural Competency Assessments and Training

Abt is in the forefront of providing cultural competency assessments and trainings for provider organizations serving underserved communities. Our assessments help program administrators, evaluators and clinicians identify strengths, challenges and promising practices; and our trainings improve the way providers approach and carry out their work. This enhances their capacity to:

- Create organizational structures that promote development of a viable cultural-competence initiative;
- Build strategies to address the needs associated with the unique responsibilities of personnel;
- Engage target communities in meaningful ways that respect culture and promote appropriate service utilization; and
- Develop effective strategies to monitor program activities and their impact on service delivery.

Associates Work in Health Disparities

Decreasing Birth Outcome Disparities

Abt conducted a national evaluation of the Healthy Start Program, a program of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) committed to reducing racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes. This involved surveying 100 Healthy Start programs and analyzing performance measures reported annually to MCHB.

Assessing Community Progress in Addressing Health Disparities

CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (NCCDPHP) retained Abt to evaluate an initiative of the Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Action Institutes (REHDAI). The initiative was designed to provide training and technical assistance to communities actively addressing health disparities through the lens of health equity. The evaluation increased understanding of what REHDAI teams were able to accomplish as a result of participation and learn what factors facilitated or inhibited progress.

Identifying African-American MSM Unaware of Their HIV Status

For CDC, Abt evaluated the relative effectiveness of three strategies for identifying previously undiagnosed African-American men who have sex with men (MSM) and motivating them to be tested for HIV and linked to medical care and prevention services.

Expanding HIV Prevention Activities in Minority Serving Institutions

Abt provided technical assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities to promote HIV awareness, testing and prevention, and responsible sexual health and harm reduction.

Expanding Mental Health Services to HIV-Positive Ethnic Minorities

Abt supports the Mental Health HIV Services Collaborative program goals of expanding mental health services for HIV-positive ethnic minorities in traditionally underserved communities and providing effective mental health services in a culturally competent manner. As the coordinating center for the program, we conduct ongoing needs assessments with the sites to identify service areas requiring improvement. We also provide technical assistance, training, and resources and work with site representatives to design programmatically and clinically meaningful evaluations at both site-specific and cross-site levels.

Making Hospitals Safer for Patients With Limited English Proficiency

Under contract to AHRQ, Abt developed a hospital guide and training module to help hospitals prevent and reduce adverse medical events for their patients with limited English proficiency. The tools—developed in collaboration with the Disparities Solutions Center at Massachusetts General Hospital—add to the government's TeamSTEPPS® program, a program designed to improve communication and teamwork skills among health care professionals.

Contact

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Abt Associates is a mission-driven, global leader in research and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 60 countries.

